

MR. R. F. SHOLL said that as every member in the House seemed to feel it his duty to speak on the present occasion, he felt it incumbent upon him too to make a few remarks. Before touching upon the speech of His Excellency the Governor he should like to congratulate the members of the Government on the very important and honorable position which they had been called upon to fill; he could assure them he had every confidence in their integrity and their ability to carry on the Government of the colony. At the same time it was not of course likely that they could all agree in everything that the Government put forward; it was not to be expected that all the details of their policy would meet with general approval. He took exception to the schedule of works foreshadowed in the Governor's speech as regards some of the works. In the 7th paragraph of the speech the Governor said: "My Ministers are keenly alive to the importance of a vigorous though prudent policy." No one, he thought, could gainsay that their policy was a "vigorous" policy, but he thought there were many members who would not agree that it was a "prudent" policy. He might say before he went any further, that he thought the hon. member for York ought to feel very much flattered at the amount of attention he had received not only from the Government but from members on all sides; he had been a target for almost every member who had addressed the House, and the hon. member must feel that there must have been a great deal in his speech the other evening to have made it the subject of so much attention. He had listened to most of the speeches, but he did not think that the arguments of the hon. member for York had been in any way approached by any member who had attacked him. The hon. member had been misquoted, his actions had been misconstrued, and (as he had said before) he thought the hon. member was to be congratulated on the very effective speech he delivered, for he must have made some very telling hits to have brought all the powers of the Government to bear upon him as they had. The Ministry came down to the House with a loan policy of £1,366,000. He thought everyone would agree that it was necessary that we should have a

loan for public works at the present juncture and at as early a date as possible. But unfortunately—no doubt it was on account of the short time which Ministers had had at their disposal in collecting information—they had come forward without supplying the House with any particulars as to their scheme. No doubt this information would be supplied later on. The first work mentioned in their schedule was a railway from Bayswater to Busselton. With regard to that particular work, he must say that unless some very clear information was put before him to satisfy him it was a desirable work and was not likely to cause a serious loss to the colony, he could not support this proposal, in its entirety. He did not know whether hon. members had read the report of the Agricultural Commission, and the evidence they took down in that district. If they had not, they would find some curious evidence from some of the settlers of the district, which went to show that even the residents of the place did not think this railway was likely to be a good thing for the Colony. He was looking over the evidence that day, and he should just like to quote some of it for the information of the House. One gentleman, now a member of that House, was asked this question: "What are the capabilities of the district for butter-producing?" His answer was: "There is not a large quantity produced—not more, I should say, than 4 or 5 tons annually. There are not many places about here where they can produce it: Mr. Gale's and Cattle Chosen, and my own place, and Mr. Layman's, and Mr. Reynolds'—that's about the extent of the butter-producing area." Another question put to him was this: "Do you think the increased production not only of dairy but other produce would justify the construction of a railway?" His answer was: "I should be very sorry to invest my money in the railway; I don't believe a railway between here and Perth would pay for a generation. That's my belief, and I'm afraid a good many persons are of the same opinion privately, and advocate it merely for the sake of the expenditure which would come in its train, while in course of construction." Then he was asked another question: "You don't think, at any rate, there would be a largely increased production, if a railway

were made between here and Perth?" His answer was: "I really don't see that there would. Nearly all the dairy land is now in the hands of private individuals." Then comes another question: "Dairy produce is not everything; there's potatoes, for instance, and cattle, and other marketable products?" To which he replied: "We can send everything now, except cattle, by steamer, except for the inconvenience of shipping at night; and cattle go nearly as well by road as by rail, though not so quickly. As to potatoes, I do not think the cultivation of potatoes could be very largely increased. I think the production of potatoes ruinous to many of our farmers; they put every ounce of manure on their potato crop, to the detriment of their other land. Under any circumstances, potato growing is a very hazardous business. No doubt there is plenty of swamp land, but the cost of clearing would be something tremendous, and there's the additional difficulty of getting men to do it." The next part of the answer was the cream of the lot: "As for increased settlement, I don't think there is much room for it in this district: I don't know where they would go, so far as I have seen of the country. Of course I am referring to unoccupied Crown land, and not to land in the hands of private individuals. There is some splendid land in the Wellington district up to Bunbury, but this side of Quindalup is very different country—low swamps." Then the question was asked him: "Would you undertake to send up 100 fowls a month at 1s. a piece?" He replied: "I would not; the difficulty we have here is there is no one who will undertake to ship them for you." This was the district where it was proposed to take this railway. Another question he was asked was: "Have you had any experience in the way of horse-breeding on your estate." The answer was: "I have tried to breed draught stock, but of late years there is no one to buy. We are all sellers. We are like so many sharks, all ready to live on one another. You cannot sell anything unless you send it away, and it's a question whether the expense would repay you." The last question he was asked was: "To what cause or causes do you attribute the apparently dejected state

of agriculture—as regards wheat and cereal cultivation—in this district?" His answer was: "I think the main cause of agriculture being, so to say, non-existent in this part of the district is there being so little land fit for it." That was the district the proposed railway was going to serve. [Mr. RICHARDSON: That is only the evidence of one man; read some of the other evidence.] The hon. member said it was only the evidence of one man. He would read from the evidence of another witness, Mr. Guerrier, a very old settler. [Mr. RICHARDSON: He is too old; read the evidence of Mr. Gale.] He is too young. Mr. Guerrier was asked this question: "What do you think of the capabilities of the district for dairying?" The answer was: "The district has almost given up its mind to dairying instead of cultivation, but the yield is nothing like what it used to be. Forty years ago I have known 3,900 lbs. of butter got from 36 cows during the season. Somehow or other the district seems to have deteriorated in that respect. Taken altogether there is too much scrub." In answer to another question the same witness said: "When I came here forty years ago, there was plenty of wheat grown, and sold at 3s. 6d. a bushel; now you cannot get a bushel of wheat grown in the district, hardly, at any price." He was also asked as to this very railway: "As to the proposed railway, you think there is no encouragement to run it into this district?" His reply was: "I should be very sorry to give any false evidence, for the sake of getting a railway into the district; but if it was coming out of my own pocket I should say let it stand. I should be very sorry to have any shares in it." That was the opinion of some of the leading farmers of the district to which it was proposed to build this railway. In the face of evidence like that, how could he support this line? This same witness was also asked this question: "You are a practical man, what do you think is the smallest area of land, such as is now open for selection, upon which a farmer could make a decent living by farming?" His answer was this: "I don't know of a place where a new-comer could get, on which to attempt to get a living. I am not aware that

there is any land about here open for selection upon which a man could earn a livelihood." There was another witness who was formerly a member of this House, Mr. Layman. He was asked this question: "Can you assign any reason why you abandoned wheat growing?" The answer was: "I can import flour cheaper than I can grow it; it was merely a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence." Yet this was the district to which they were asked now to have a railway built! There was a good deal more of the same kind of evidence, and in the face of what he had read to the House he thought members would excuse him if he said he could not support this railway. He did not consider he should be doing his duty to the colony if he supported a proposal to build a railway to a district where the people who lived in the district gave such evidence as that. Possibly the information which the Government might be in a position to place before them might induce him to support a portion of this line. If he opposed the Government in this matter or any other work it would not be out of any factious opposition. What he should endeavor to do would be to do what he considered would be in the best interests of the Colony. It had been said that the great object we ought to have in view was the development of agriculture. When they came to bear in mind the railways already built for the same purpose, by the Government and also the Great Southern Railway, and again the Midland Railway, all built for the development of agriculture, and the millions of acres of land already available for that purpose, he thought we had better wait and see what the effect of these railways would be upon agricultural settlement before attempting any more railways for the same object. He thought that before we did any more in the way of stimulating agriculture we ought to do something to provide a consuming population; and he thought the best way of doing that would be to develop our mineral resources. If the Government were satisfied that the Eastern goldfields were a permanency, and that the prospects of the fields were such as to warrant them in building a railway to them, he thought that would be one of the most important works that should be carried out, and that at the

very earliest date. Such a line would be in the interests of the pastoralists, agriculturists, and the whole community. Nothing would tend more to attract people into the colony than the development of our mineral resources. If we had a large consuming population, he should then be glad to do everything he could to develop agricultural settlement and the cultivation of the soil; but with a limited number of consumers he thought it would be unwise to go too far in this direction. With regard to harbor works at Fremantle, he thought it was nearly time something was done in that direction. It was a question to his mind of how much we could afford to spend at the present time. We had an enormous territory and a very sparse population. With our present population, after raising this loan, it would take one-third of our present revenue to pay the interest on our public debt. He quite acknowledged that our population was likely to increase, and that the burden would be correspondingly lightened; still he would be very considerably taxed. So far as taxation was concerned, we were already taxed through the Customs pretty well as high as we could bear. If people found they could not live here as cheaply as they could elsewhere, they would not settle amongst us; that was very certain. There were other works included in the schedule before them which would have to be carefully considered. He thought the interests of the North would have to be taken into consideration; the people of the Northern districts suffered great inconvenience from the absence of facilities to get their produce shipped; and he was very glad to find that the Government proposed to have a dredge for the purpose of improving these shipping places. He thought that would be one of the most useful works that could be undertaken, not only in these Southern parts but all along the coast. He only hoped that when the Government brought forward their Bill they would be able to satisfy the House as to these works being likely to be reproductive; at any rate, he thought the House would want a great deal of information with regard to some of them before they would be justified in sanctioning them. He rather regretted that paragraph 12 had not been

omitted from the Speech. Having said that, he did not propose to read the paragraph.

MR. QUINLAN said that while he must confess that he had been somewhat surprised at the magnitude of the policy set forth by the Government, he thought it would be acceptable to the public in general. He could not without further information give it his entire support, in respect to many of the items mentioned as part of the Ministerial policy; at the same time he must say he considered it on the whole a good one and certainly a progressive one, and one that members should, so far as they could, assist the Government in carrying out. He regretted that no mention was made in the Speech of any proposed amendment of the Constitution, by the abolition of the property qualification of the members of that House, and the extension of the franchise. Of course these were questions that would have to come forward in due course, and he should then be prepared to express his opinion upon them. In his own humble opinion, legislation could do much in this direction to add to the contentment of the people as regards their new Constitution, and for that reason he was sorry that no reference was made to the subject in the Governor's Speech. With this notable exception he thought he could give the Ministerial policy or programme his unqualified support, provided he was satisfied with the information which they were promised when the Loan Bill came before them. On this, his first occasion of addressing the House, he did not intend to trespass at any length upon the time of the House. He was not a man of many words. When each item came before them in the Loan Bill he should not fail in giving his vote for what he conceived to be in the best interests of the colony. Some hon. members seemed to think that the amount which the Government proposed to borrow was not enough; others thought it was too much. To his mind it was about what he had expected, if the Ministry were going to carry out a liberal policy of public works. He thought the amount should not be less, at any rate. He was agreeably surprised to find them coming forward with such a bold and vigorous policy.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion) said he found himself rising to address the House at a rather late stage in the debate, and, necessarily at this late stage, the ground having been well traversed by those who preceded him, he would have less to say than he would have had under ordinary circumstances. A great deal had been said, in the first place, by one gentleman on the opposite side of the House, who, while disclaiming the position attributed to him as leader of the Opposition, seemed at any rate to arrogate to himself the role and the attributes of that leadership,—a great deal had been said by that hon. member and by other members on the same side of the House and also on this side of the House, as to the surprise created in their minds by what they were pleased to term the bold and vigorous policy of the Government. He should like to read a few words from the 3rd paragraph of His Excellency's Speech, in which His Excellency complimented them upon the great change that His Excellency anticipated, and the many benefits which he believed the colony would derive from the adoption of the present form of Government. As His Excellency remarked, "all hearts in the old country are in sympathy with you at this important moment," and not only in the old country but also in the other colonies. He would read His Excellency's own words: "The Queen herself," His Excellency said, "has been graciously pleased to express the warmest interest in your welfare; her Ministers wish you well; politicians watch with interest the extension of Parliamentary Government to the last of the Australian provinces which can ever receive it; numbers of intending settlers, attracted by recent discussions and events, are probably at this moment turning their attention to your shores; and last, but not least, we have the sympathy and good-will of the neighboring Eastern Colonies, whose support and assistance were so valuable to us in connection with the recent change, and who see in that change, as we do ourselves, a further step towards the ultimate federation of Australasia." With the eyes of the world so to speak turned upon us, was this the time to adopt a timid and halting policy? Did these